

Message Text

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73

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00 INR-07

NSAE-00 L-03 FBO-02 A-01 H-02 /051 W

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R 081031Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6190

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

CINCPAC

DIA WASHDC/AH

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, AFSP, ABLD, LA, US

SUBJECT: INFORMAL DEMARCHE BY FOREIGN MINISTRY ON "HILLTOP"
HOUSES

REF: VIENTIANE 0278 (031030Z FEB 76)

SUMMARY: CHIEF OF PROTOCOL OF MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
CALLED IN EMBOFF ON MARCH 8 AND INFORMED HIM THAT MINISTRY
OF DEFENSE WAS PERSISTING IN ITS DESIRE TO TAKE OVER
"HILLTOP" RESIDENCES. HE ASKED EMBOFF'S REACTION. EMBOFF
REPLIED THAT EMBASSY WOULD REQUIRE A FORMAL NOTE AND THEN
WOULD HAVE TO INFORM DEPARTMENT OF STATE AND AWAIT ITS
INSTRUCTIONS. HE DID NOT KNOW WHAT DEPARTMENT'S REACTION
WOULD BE, BUT IT WOULD, OF COURSE, BE INTERESTED IN
WHETHER LAO GOVERNMENT WOULD COMPENSATE THE EMBASSY
FOR THE CONSIDERABLE EXPENSES THAT WOULD BE INVOLVED.
IT ALSO MIGHT WISH TO SEEK AN OVERALL SOLUTION TO
THE EMBASSY'S REAL ESTATE PROBLEMS IN VIENTIANE,
PARTICULARLY AS REGARDS THE EMBASSY'S GSO/SILVER CITY
COMPOUND WHICH CONTINUED TO BE ILLEGALLY OCCUPIED BY
THE LAO GOVERNMENT. THE CHIEF OF PROTOCOL SAID HE

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WOULD MAKE A REPORT OF OUR VIEWS, AND LEFT THE IMPRES-

SION THAT WE WOULD RECEIVE A NOTE SOON ASKING US TO
VACATE THE "HILLTOP" HOUSES. END SUMMARY.

1. MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS CHIEF OF PROTOCOL
KHAMTAN RATTANAVONG SUMMONED EMBOFF TO HIS OFFICE
MARCH 8. KHAMTAN SAID MINISTRY OF NATIONAL DEFENSE
PERSISTED IN ITS DESIRE TO TAKE OVER GROUP OF NINE
RENTED EMBASSY RESIDENCES KNOWN AS "HILLTOP". DEFENSE
MINISTRY WANTED TO MAKE AREA AROUND ITS BUILDING AT
PHONEKHENG A "MILITARY ZONE" AND LAO GOVERNMENT
GENERALLY WANTED TO REGROUP DIPLOMATS IN OTHER SECTIONS
OF VIENTIANE. OTHER DIPLOMATS HAD ALREADY MOVED OUT
OF THAT LUANG AREA. HE ASKED FOR EMBOFF'S REACTION
TO THIS DEMARCHE.

2. EMBOFF REPLIED THAT EMBASSY COULD HAVE NO OFFICIAL
REACTION TO SUCH AN INFORMAL REQUEST. IF THE EMBASSY
RECEIVED A FORMAL NOTE ASKING THAT IT VACATE HOUSES
IN QUESTION IT WOULD INFORM THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE OF
THE LAO GOVERNMENT'S DESIRE AND AWAIT DEPARTMENT'S
INSTRUCTIONS. FOR EMBASSY'S PART, ITS EMPLOYEES HAD
BEEN LIVING AT "HILLTOP" FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS. EMBASSY
HAD NO DESIRE TO GIVE UP THE HOUSES. IF WE WERE TO
MOVE IT WOULD REQUIRE A FORMAL NOTE FROM THE LAO GOVERN-
MENT. OTHERWISE, DEPARTMENT WOULD NEVER UNDERSTAND
WHY THE EMBASSY WAS INCURRING THE CONSIDERABLE EXPENSE
OF FINDING AND RENTING NEW HOUSES AND BRINGING THEM UP
TO THE STANDARD NECESSARY FOR EMBASSY EMPLOYEES TO LIVE
IN THEM, PARTICULARLY WHEN SIGNIFICANT SUMS HAD JUST BEEN
SPENT ON "HILLTOP". THERE WAS ALSO, OF COURSE, THE
EXPENSE OF THE MOVES THEMSELVES.

3. EMBOFF STATED HE HAD NO IDEA WHAT DEPARTMENT'S
REACTION WOULD BE SHOULD LAO GOVERNMENT DECIDE TO GO
AHEAD. IT MIGHT DEPEND IN PART ON LAO GOVERNMENT'S
WILLINGNESS TO COMPENSATE EMBASSY FOR THE EXTRAORDINARY
EXPENSES THAT WOULD BE OCCASIONED BY ITS ACTION. LAO
GOVERNMENT, OF COURSE, HAD THE RIGHT TO DECLARE
"MILITARY AREAS" IF IT WISHED, IT ALSO HAD THE DUTY,
HOWEVER, TO BEHAVE ACCORDING TO ESTABLISHED INTERNA-
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TIONAL RULES TOWARDS DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS. IN ADDI-
TION, DEPARTMENT MIGHT ASK EMBASSY TO SEEK OVERALL
SOLUTION TO USG REAL ESTATE PROBLEMS IN VIENTIANE.
THIS WOULD INVOLVE SETTTLING QUESTION OF EMBASSY'S
GSO/SILVER CITY COMPOUND WHICH HAD BEEN ILLEGALLY
OCCUPIED BY LAO AUTHORITIES SINCE JUNE, 1975.

4. KHAMTAN APPEARED IGNORANT OF GSO/SILVER CITY

SITUATION AND EMBOFF GAVE BRIEF RESUME OF ITS HISTORY. KHAMTAN ASKED IF NA HAI DIAO AND KM-6 SITUATIONS WERE NOT SIMILAR AND EMBOFF EXPLAINED WHY THIS WAS NOT THE CASE.

5. THROUGHOUT CONVERSTATION, KHAMTAN REFERRED ONLY TO THE NINE "HILLTOP" HOUSES AS BEING COVETED BY DEFENSE MINISTRY. EMBOFF INFORMED HIM THAT THERE WERE TWO OTHER EMBASSY RESIDENCE IN THE IMMEDIATE AREA AND ASKED IF DEFENSE MINISTRY PLANNED TO TAKE THEM OVER AS WELL. EMBASSY WISHED TO RETAIN ALL OF THESE HOUSES, BUT IF THE LAO GOVERNMENT DID INDEED WISH TO CREATE A " MILITARY AREA" AROUND DEFENSE MINISTRY IT WOULD BE BEST TO KNOW IF THESE HOUSES WERE INVOLVED TOO. (THESE HOUSES ARE OCCUPIED BY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER AND RSO, FBO LEASE NUMBERS 247 AND 386.) OTHERWISE WE WOULD NOT KNOW WHERE WE STOOD. KHAMTAN WAS UNAWARE OF THESE OTHER RESIDENCES. THE DEFENSE MINISTRY HAD ONLY MENTIONED "HILLTOP". HE AGREED TO LOOK INTO THE MATTER. EMBOFF REEMPHASIZED THAT WE HAD NO DESIRE TO LEAVE ANY OF THESE HOUSES.

6. KHAMTAN CLOSED BY SAYING HE WOULD MAKE A REPORT TO HIS SUPERIORS.

7. COMMENT: IT IS MORE THAN PROBABLY THAT WE WILL RECEIVE A NOTE IN A WEEK OF TWO ASKING US TO VACATE "HILLTOP" AND PERHAPS THE OTHER TWO RESIDENCES AS WELL. DEFENSE MINISTRY WANTS THE AREA AND FOREIGN MINISTRY'S, OR PERHAPS JUST KHAMTAN'S, RELUCTANCE WILL IN THE END BE OVERCOME. THOUGH THERE WILL, OF COURSE,BE EXPENSES, IF WE CAN DELAY VACATING THE HOUSES INVOLVED UNTIL THE LARGE STAFF TURNOVER WHICH IS TO TAKE PLACE IN THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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EMBASSY THIS SUMMER, WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO MINIMIZE OUR PROBLEMS.
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